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Foreword and Acknowledgements

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This study of a primitive tribe suffers from two disadvantages, one inherent in the material, and one personal. The Lepchas are one of a number of mongoloid tribes inhabiting the southern slopes of the Himalayas; since most of the countries in which these tribes live are partially or completely closed to Europeans, there is very little precise information available about this culture area, and consequently many questions of culture contact, which will be inevitably raised in the following account, are at present unanswerable. I myself am not a professional anthropologist, in so far as I have never followed as a student any academic course in anthropology.

As an undergraduate at Cambridge I was much impressed by the work and legend of W. D. H. Rivers, who had died shortly before I became a student, and I followed with very great interest the lectures of Professor Sir William Ridgeway, who died at the end of my second year. But although I found the subject of anthropology an enthralling one, and read all the books I could on the subject, I never at that period of my life considered it feasible that I should myself become an anthropologist. I was at that time more interested in creative writing.

In 1934 I made, almost by chance, a three months' journey in West Africa, a journey undertaken under very favourable conditions; on my return I wrote a book about this journey; and though from the point of view of anthropology it was inevitably so superficial as to be almost worthless, it was indirectly through this book that the present study was made. It was through my book that I made the acquaintance of Major C. J. Morris, late 2nd Bn. 3rd Q.A.O. Gurkha Rifles, and he proposed to me that I should accompany him to India in 1936, after his return from the third Everest expedition; he hoped to make a study of the Gurkhas in their unexplored home in Nepal, but the hoped-for permission to enter

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that closed land was not forthcoming; so, as an alternative, he got the permission of the Maharajah of Sikkim to study the Lepchas in his country. During the whole of the visit Mr. Morris was my companion, and it was thanks to him that I was able to ignore both the practical and administrative difficulties in a strange land and under strange conditions which would most probably have proved insuperable to me unaided. Through his long-standing friendship with the Maharajah we not only obtained the permission to live indefinitely in Sikkim—a permission not easily obtained—but also his active collaboration in the choice of a site to work in and the co-operation of all the people, official and unofficial, directly or indirectly involved. I find it difficult to express adequately my sense of great indebtedness to Mr. Morris; his knowledge of local customs, both Native and European, were of inestimable help.

It was also through my book *Africa Dances* that I met Dr. Margaret Mead of the American Museum of Natural History, Dr. Ruth Benedict of Columbia University, and Dr. John Dollard, of the Institute of Human Relations, Yale University, New Haven. Under the guidance of Drs. Mead and Benedict I spent the winter of 1935–36 studying the methodology and theoretical background of anthropology, and from Dr. John Dollard I learned to see in focus the interrelated problems of the individual in society. It is quite impossible for me to estimate my intellectual debt to these three inspiring teachers, and I have also to thank them for a very great service; for they undertook the great burden of reading the first draft of this book, commenting on it and advising me on a number of points. The sacrifice of their time by these hard-working people is a gift of inestimable value; my only hope is that this book is, to some slight extent, not altogether unworthy of their pains. If this should happily be so, it is almost entirely owing to their instruction and advice. I must also thank very sincerely Mrs. F. Norman, of the Department of Psychological Medicine, of Guy's Hospital, London, for having read the first draft of this book, advised me upon it, and discussed it with me; her help, particularly in Book Two, has been very great.

I arrived in India at the very end of 1936. Before going into Sikkim I spent two months in Kalimpong studying the Lepcha language with the help of missionised Lepchas. At the end of that period I had an adequate comprehension of the language, but, though I could understand everything that was said with, I think,

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I am aware that the use of interpreters is held to invalidate a great deal of anthropological work; but the Lepchas got used to Sukra Singh—a person of endless patience and constant good temper—as soon or sooner than they did to us, and I question whether his absence would have made for any greater intimacy. I was never really dependent on him, and, without his slowing up the pace of conversation, I could never have got the almost word for word texts that I obtained. When he was not with me I found myself quite incapable of taking sufficiently full notes; and those I made from memory subsequently inevitably lacked the clearness and precision of those I took more normally. Unless I had invented some form of Lepcha shorthand or employed a dictaphone my work among the Lepchas would have been far less detailed; only when talking to children or to big groups was the presence of my interpreter useless or a hindrance.

I have put a few notes on the Lepcha language into an appendix[1] for the benefit of those who are interested in such matters and also a vocabulary of those Lepcha words which I have been forced to employ in the text. I have avoided using Lepcha words as far as possible, and have given no Lepcha texts; I am unable to understand the reasoning of those anthropologists who consider that the inclusion in an English book of sentences in a language which not one reader can understand gives the study greater scientific or objective value. My own feeling is that the value of texts is almost entirely linguistic; and so for the use of philologists I propose to deposit a few selected texts (stories and prayers) with my Lepcha vocabulary with the School of Oriental Languages, London.

I lived in Zongu among the Lepchas during March, April and May 1937. Frequently in this book, in order to avoid clumsiness, I have used the present tense and referred to different periods as 'now', 'three months ago', 'ten years ago.' In all cases the point of reference from which time is measured is the spring of 1937.

In India and Sikkim I received kindness and help from so many people that it is difficult even to enumerate them all. The many people who have experienced the great and unfailing kindness and hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Norman Odling of Kalimpong will understand that I can find no words to express my gratitude to them; you cannot thank people who have given you a home. I should also like to thank very sincerely His Highness Sir Tashi Namgyal, K.C.I.E., Maharajah of Sikkim, for his kindness and

[1] See Appendix VI.

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of literacy is absolutely essential for the practising lama, and until the Lepchas could be taught Tibetan it was necessary that translations of the scriptures should be available in their own tongue. All the existing Lepcha manuscripts of which I have heard are translations of the Tibetan lamaist scriptures; it is said that some specifically Lepcha compilations of mythology and anecdote have been made and possibly some may have escaped the destructive zeal of fanatical lamas. In Lingthem only one very old lama possessed or could read a Lepcha book.

Nowadays religious instruction is given in Tibetan. In Zongu literacy is exclusively confined to the reading of Tibetan scriptures and has no sort of influence or use in everyday life; lamas who can read religious books and write religious formulas are quite incapable of reading or writing a letter in any language. As will be seen later this factual illiteracy puts the Lepchas at a considerable disadvantage in their commercial transactions. Some of the lamas of Lingthem read the Tibetan scriptures with ease and even fluency; others appeared to me to have learned portions of the scriptures by heart and to know when to turn over the pages; but I was never able to prove this. Tibetan books are printed from wooden blocks in long narrow rectangular pages; to learn to read the pupil gets by heart the contents of one page at a time, only passing on to the next when he has completely mastered and is able to recite the first.

During the second half of the last century one Colonel (later General) G. G. Mainwaring took the Lepchas and their language under his special protection. General Mainwaring was, judging by his literary remains,[6] so perfect a type of the eccentric Indian officer who supports freak religions and fantastic prophecies derived from the pyramids that he seems almost to be an invented caricature. After profound thought General Mainwaring came to the conclusion that not only were the Lepchas the descendants of our first parents, but that—as could be simply shown by a device of the General's called the Power of Letters—Lepcha was the language spoken in the Garden of Eden. Of the people and the language he writes:

'It is impossible that a people with language so comprehensive; with manners, though primitive, so superior, as to entitle

[6] *A Lepcha Grammar*, by Col. G. G. Mainwaring. Calcutta 1876.
Dictionary of the Lepcha Language, compiled by the late General G. Mainwaring, revised and completed by Albert Grünwedel, Berlin, printed and published by order of Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India in Council. Berlin 1898.

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● 114 them to rank high among civilised nations, could be engendered amidst the wilds and fastnesses of the Himalayas. They retain, in so marked a degree, all the simple ways of the patriarchs of old, as to lead to the conclusion that they must have remained isolated ever since such customs were in vogue. The type of features indicates that before settling in the Himalayas, they had probably resided in Mongolia and Manchuria and in, or near one of these countries, the body of the people might still be found. The language is a monosyllabic one (though not altogether an isolating one, as it possesses in a degree—as all languages however primitive do—an agglutinative structure) and is unquestionably far anterior to the Hebrew or Sanskrit. It is pre-eminently an *Ursprache*, being probably, and I think, I may without fear of misrepresentations, state it to be, the oldest language extent. It is a most comprehensive and beautiful one; and regarded alone, as a prolific source of the derivations and etyma of words, it is invaluable to the philological world. It however recommends itself to us on higher grounds; it possesses and plainly evinces the principle and motive on which all language is constructed.[5] But like everything really good in this world it has been despised and rejected. To allow the Lepcha race, and the language itself to die out would indeed be most barbarous, and inexpressibly sad.'

Although, or perhaps because, the good General was so conscious of the invaluable qualities of the Lepcha language, he was inclined to be severe with the Lepchas who spoke, to his mind, incorrectly. He constructed a huge grammar on Indo-Germanic principles (Lepcha is an uninflected language with no grammar at all) in which he administers severe reproofs to casual speakers; thus

'The Lepchas are apt to pronounce o as u, and hence when writing to confound it with u; this error should be avoided and corrected in the Lepchas.'

'Different local pronunciations, however, and often ignorance, etc., render the change, in the first syllable of dissyllabic words, very common, and sometimes, very irregular; this disorganising tendency should be, altogether, discouraged; and the proper

[5] *Note by Gen. Mainwaring*: In the structure of the Lepcha language I have discovered the system on which, I consider, all language is based. By an exegesis which I have, in part, prepared (combined with a diagram showing the rudimental power of letters), the root and true signification of all words in all languages, are, at once, apparent.

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prefixed syllable, when decided upon, should be adhered to. The principle should be laid down as a canon, and systematically impressed on the Lepchas.' 114

The General was so occupied with his teaching—he founded a sort of college for Lepchas near Darjeeling—that he died before he had time to publish The Power of Letters, and the Lepcha dictionary which was to illustrate his points. After his death his manuscript was edited and published by a German Tibetan scholar who knew no Lepcha and not too much English; all the General's fantastic etymological derivations were cut out and the Lepcha script abandoned in favour of an almost incomprehensible system of phonetic transliteration. The government official in charge wrote to Herr Grünwedel 'The so-called Lepcha alphabet used by General Mainwaring is a pure fiction. The language has properly speaking no written character, though it is possible that on a few occasions a debased variety of the Tibetan character may have been resorted to. There is however no necessity whatever and no real justification for incurring the expense of starting Lepcha type, nor as a matter of fact can a complete fount of such type be constructed.' Considering that there were then numerous Lepcha books in manuscript in existence, and that the Baptists had already founded a complete Lepcha type, the instructions are, in a small way, a fine example of Imperial diplomacy. The dictionary is almost entirely Lepcha-English, and is chiefly useful for its indication of Tibetan loan-words; the identifications of plants and animals are in many cases questionable.

As far as I know the only other person who has paid more than passing attention to the Lepchas is Miss C. de Beauvoir Stocks, who made two tours in Sikkim in 1925 to collect folktales; she spent three days in Lingthem. I came across a number of the stories Miss Stocks had printed[6] and though many of them had been bowdlerised almost out of recognition (probably through the prudery of her interpreter) the almost word-for-word similarity of passages of no particular dramatic interest was striking. Miss Stocks also added some notes on Lepcha customs which correspond in practically no particular with my observations; many are the same as those made about the Sikkimese in the *Gazeteer of Sikkim*.

[6] 'Folklore and Customs of the Lap-chas of Sikkim.' By C. de Beauvoir Stocks. From the Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (New Series), Vol. XXI, 1925, No. 4.

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as good as another. Although the two places are so near in terms of modern travel, in everything else Talung is thousands of years behind, looked at, that is, from what our unhappy machine-age (but actually slave-driven) civilisation is pleased to regard as progress. Talung has neither drains nor electric light; nor, more fortunately, any newspapers; but its inhabitants are happy and, all things considered, contented. A few, a very few, of the people had heard vague and distorted rumours of the Great War (that which did not end war): none, however, so far as I know, had heard of India's new constitution, nor even of King George the Sixth, and the day of the Coronation passed unnoticed, except in so far as it was a fine day and so permitted a full day's work in the fields.

My first view of the Talung was in the spring of 1936, on the way to Everest. We did not enter the valley since our road lay straight through Sikkim to the plains of Tibet, and there was no time for excursions off the route. But from Singhik bungalow one looks right up the valley to Kinchinjunga at its head, one of the most spectacular sights in the whole Himalaya. But on this occasion we did not see the mountain, which was hidden in cloud, and the valley itself looked grim and uninviting, with patches of winter snow still lying in the shadier parts of the higher slopes. When we returned in July the valley was deep in mist and filled with small clouds which looked like floating wads of cotton-wool; but even at this distance many shining patches of emerald cultivation were clearly visible on the steep hillsides, although we could see no villages.

During the previous autumn I had been staying in Nepal, hoping, amongst other things, to get permission to round off my ethnological studies of the people (which I had been pursuing intermittently for years) by a stay of some months in an actual Gurkha village. My proposals proved unacceptable to the Maharaja, who found it impossible to make any exception to the rule, laid down by his predecessors and never once relaxed, by which no European is permitted to

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114 travel in the interior of the country. As an ethnologist I bitterly regretted this decision: but as a friend of the country I fully sympathised with His Highness's orders. If the policy of excluding strangers from Nepal is ever changed (which seems unlikely), I hope that I may be one of the first to benefit from it: but for the present no one who has seen the disastrous results of the contact of Western civilisation with some of the more primitive peoples of India can doubt the wisdom of Nepal's rulers.

In the meantime I was forced to consider other alternatives. It had always been my intention eventually to spend some time among the people of the Tibetan border. There are many Nepalese settlers in Sikkim, and I hoped, after seeing the people in their own country, to find out how they adjusted their lives when they came in contact with another culture. Also, there were the Lepchas, a shy and retiring people, said to be rapidly dying out, who claim to be the original inhabitants of the country. While I was still in Nepal I discussed plans with the British Minister, Colonel Bailey (some of whose earlier wanderings resulted in the first discovery of the blue poppy, *Meconopsis Baileyii*, which now thrives even in Hyde Park). He had been for many years Political Officer in Sikkim and knew the country intimately. It was from him that I first heard of the Talung Valley. Although he had not himself visited it he told me that it was the one purely Lepcha place still in existence. In all other parts of Sikkim the people had intermarried with Tibetans and Nepalis to such an extent that they had lost all traces of tribal consciousness. Not so, however, in the Talung; for this valley formed part of the Maharaja's personal estate and none but Lepchas were permitted to own land or to settle in it.

114 On our return from Everest I talked the matter over with 609 the Maharaja. His Highness said he had no objection to my spending some months in the valley; but warned me that it might be difficult to get on speaking terms with the people, who had the reputation of being extremely shy and of

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resenting the intrusion of strangers. He told me that a few years ago, during an epidemic of small-pox, he had sent a vaccinator across to the valley in order to afford the people protection from the disease. But as soon as the man crossed the bridge the people fled from their houses and took to the forest, only returning when he became tired of waiting and went back to Gangtok. So far as I was concerned this story only added zest to the chase; and before leaving for England I arranged to return to Sikkim in the following spring.

On a previous occasion when I was in England, in 1934 I think it was, I had met Geoffrey Gorer at the house of a mutual friend, and we had carried on an intermittent correspondence ever since. In the meantime he had spent some months in America, and while there had met Dr. Ruth Benedict, whose remarkable *Patterns of Culture* has influenced many of the younger and more open-minded ethnologists. As a result of working both with her and with Dr. Margaret Mead, the best-known exponent of her ideas, Geoffrey decided that he wanted to see for himself just exactly what field ethnology was all about, so I said he could come and help me, little thinking that he would accept. We were, now that I come to think of it, a most oddly assorted couple: Geoffrey, a self-acknowledged gourmet, and never really happy when too long away from the centre of things; and I, who can hardly tell the difference between caviare and tinned salmon, and to whom civilisation (so called) is a thing to be escaped from at all costs for as long and as often as possible. Also, according to Geoffrey, I have strong masochistic tendencies; and since I am passionately devoted to mountains and mountaineering a well-developed "death wish"; but in his view nearly all violent exercise is merely a method of punishing oneself. Before taking to ethnology I had been for nearly twenty years in the regular army; but as for this it was, in Geoffrey's words, "only occasionally apparent." Actually, all this boils down to the fact that he belongs to that post-war generation to whom (quite rightly) freedom of every sort is all, whereas I grew up in an earlier

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114 age and was taught to believe that a measure of self-discipline was good for the soul. We never had a quarrel, but doubtless got on one another's nerves from time to time. In view of the fact that our life in Sikkim alternated between intense hard work and complete but unavoidable boredom this was almost inevitable.

114 121 These personal details would normally be of no interest to anyone but our own selves. I have inserted them here, however, because, to me at least, it seems important in reading a description of a foreign culture to know how the writer fits into his own. It is almost impossible (and would be extremely dull) to describe the customs of a people entirely objectively; and so it follows that my description of Lepcha home life is inevitably coloured, and possibly limited, by my own outlook. I have concentrated on the things that interested me. Fortunately for us both, Geoffrey was interested mostly in other aspects and is writing a psychological study of the people from the Freudian and Marxist points of view. Our two books, therefore, while dealing (more or less) with the same subject, will have little in common; and in addition I have drawn on my notes and memories of previous journeys in Sikkim, Nepal and Tibet.

121 According to *The Oxford English Dictionary* ethnography is the "scientific description of races of men." I can make no such claim for the following account, which, although the [122] work was carried out under the auspices of the William Wyse Foundation (University of Cambridge), which awarded me its studentship in Social Anthropology, pretends to be no more than a plain unvarnished description of some four months' residence in a Lepcha village. It is not intended for experts and assumes no previous knowledge. The "scientific description" of the culture as a whole, in which we hope to collaborate, may possibly follow later, but will not be ready for some considerable time.

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On arrival at Madras, which an Indian writer, Mr. R. K. Narayan, describes as "hot for ten months of the year and hotter for two," we found a railway strike in progress; and since there was no boat on to Calcutta for a week after our arrival we did not reach that place until the last day of December. There was nothing to detain us in Calcutta except the fine collection of Indian paintings and sculpture in the museum, and for that a full morning was sufficient. There is nothing of architectural interest in the city, unless one includes the recently-completed Victoria Memorial. Of this it is reported that a famous continental architect burst into tears as soon as he beheld it: "What a pity," he said; "and such lovely material!"

Near Government House there are a number of bronze statues of retired viceroys. Once, when I was passing through Calcutta, I had with me a Gurkha orderly, and to pass the time before our train left in the evening I took him all over the city. The only thing that really interested him was this double row of defunct pro-Consuls, to which he asked to be taken a second time. I asked him why. "Well," he said, "with us, you know, a dark skin is a sign of inferior birth; but you people, you bring out great men from England to rule the country and then put up statues which show them with black faces: or is it that they go that colour when they die?"

* * * * *

After a month or so in Kalimpong, during which we struggled each morning with the intricacies of Lepcha grammar, we left for Gangtok, travelling on foot in order to give Geoffrey a chance to see something of the country, which was new to him. As a concession to his hedonistic tendencies I agreed to keep on our cook, who demanded (and obtained) the unheard-of wage of fifty-five rupees a month. I had never before travelled in such luxury, usually contenting myself with one general drudge-of-all-work and the absolute minimum of cooking apparatus. This time,

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however, we took a complete outfit, including even china plates and cups, a regular battery of pots and pans, and vast quantities of a special brand of American coffee (which I must admit was excellent), and special machines for its preparation. Most of the apparatus was never used.

On arrival at Gangtok our staff was increased by Palden, one of His Highness's Lepcha orderlies, who was to act as liaison between us and the locals. He spent most of his time in scouring the countryside in search of chickens and eggs. This job was not quite such a sinecure as perhaps it sounds; for towards the end of our stay we had consumed practically all the local poultry and had to get even eggs from as far as three and four days' journey away. By virtue of his official connection with the Palace, Palden's status (albeit humble; his normal duties consisting in the delivery of letters in Gangtok) was swollen to enormous stature in the eyes of the trusting Lepchas. From our point of view, however, this was all to the good, for it enabled him to demand permission for us to see all sorts of domestic ceremonies which would otherwise have been entirely hidden from our eyes.

There was also Geoffrey's English-speaking interpreter, Sukra Sing; and to work with me, one Dhawa, who spoke Lepcha and Nepali, but who knew no English. Both of these were Christians, the latter being a recent convert. They were both very disapproving, as indeed was Palden, of the local Lepchas, to whom they considered themselves vastly superior. On wet days, or on the frequent occasions when we had no informants, Dhawa would spend the whole day, from earliest dawn until well after dark, playing a bamboo flute which he had himself constructed. Unless interrupted he would play right through the Church of Scotland Hymnal, sometimes repeating his favourite tunes five and six times in succession. I believe he did this as an atonement for the extremely Rabelaisian conversations he was at times asked to translate. Whenever the conversation had in his opinion gone far enough in this direction he would get up without a word and slink quietly away; and shortly after we would hear the

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114 horribly familiar strains of "Abide with me," slightly out of
124 tune, issuing from the house next door in which he and the servants lived. I never made any effort to restrain him, for which I hope to receive due credit in any future existence which may be my lot.

Sukra Sing was what in India is technically known as a "compounder," which means that he had worked in a hospital for some months, knew a certain amount (in his case a dangerous amount) of simple doctoring and first-aid methods, and was authorised to "compound," or make up medicines to prescription, without, however, being responsible if he inadvertently confused aconite with aqua. He
[797] was also under training as a missionary and was working under the auspices of the Church of Scotland, whose missionaries are rightly interested less in obtaining "scalps" than in improving the people's condition, the only possible excuse, in my opinion, for missionary work amongst primitive peoples. I shall have more to say about missionary activities later on in this book; but in the meantime I cannot help thinking that Sukra Sing will now go out into the field with considerably more tolerance for his "uncivilised" Lepcha brethren than would otherwise have been the case. He was fortunately not musical, but showed signs towards the end of our stay of a wakening interest in the flute. Dhawa, however, preferred to play solo.

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114 We left Gangtok without any very clear idea of our exact
636 destination. His Highness had suggested Jongu as being the most suitable place in which to commence our studies; and so to Jongu we set off. No one was quite sure of the exact position of this place; nor was the Ordnance Survey map helpful, for it omitted all trace of this, to us at least, important place. On arrival at Mangen, however, where we were to leave the main trade route through Sikkim, the mystery was solved, for it there transpired that Jongu was not a village but a district; a district, moreover, which stretched from roughly

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the top of Kinchinjunga to the far banks of the Teesta, which we could see churning away a thousand feet below us. To which village did we wish to go? Our informant rattled off the names of the numerous alternatives with machine-gun rapidity, but so far as I was concerned one place was as good as another. I said that I wanted a large village and one where the houses were all close together, since this would facilitate work and enable us to camp in the middle. In answer to this it appeared that there were two possible alternatives: Lingtem and Lungden. The former was said to possess a fine new monastery, whereas Lungden had none; also it was slightly larger and a bit more inaccessible. I plumped for Lingtem, monasteries being very much in my line, and thither we decided to go the following morning.

Very early the next morning Palden came to my bedside. During the night he had been talking to the villagers (they are constantly in and out of Mangen), and they were not so certain that they wanted us now that they realised we wished to stay in Lingtem for at least some months. They were suspicious of our motives, so he said, and were afraid that we had come to enlist them for some sort of service elsewhere. He also said that he was unable to allay their suspicions, since he himself, to be quite frank, was a bit uncertain about it all.

The Jongu people had of course seen plenty of Europeans. Most of them went from time to time to Gangtok, and many had been as far afield as Kalimpong and Darjeeling: also on several occasions the members of the various Kinchinjunga expeditions had passed through their valley; but this was a very different matter from settling down to stay for months in one village.

Amongst the Lingtem men was one Tempa who, I discovered, spoke Nepali fluently: also he was a man of some position in the village. I sent for him. I told him why we had come: that we Europeans had made a sorry mess of the business of living: that we had forgotten to a great extent what it meant to be happy. I told him also that at one time the people of Europe, too, had lived lives as free and

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I suspect that geologists would find this explanation unacceptable: but in Lingtem there are no geologists; and as for me, I prefer the Lepcha story. It is a good example of their way of thinking and will serve as an introduction to what is to follow.

We reached Lingtem in an hour from the pass and found the headman waiting for us with a gift of eggs and milk. He told us we might live in the monastery itself; but this had the disadvantage that one might not smoke inside the building. Eventually, however, the Mandal said it would be all right providing there was no smoking in the actual rooms where the images are kept; so we decided to move in straight away.

For want of a better word in the English language the Lamaist *gompa* is generally described as a monastery, though such places can in no way be compared with the religious institutions known by that name in Europe. The inmates of *gompas* are sometimes celibates (but seldom so in Sikkim) and most monasteries own property: but apart from this there is, as Mme David-Neel, the eminent Tibetan scholar and traveller, has pointed out, hardly anything in common between the Christian and the Lamaist religious orders.

The Lingtem monastery is about sixty feet square and has two stories. In appearance it is almost identical with the ordinary Lepcha house, except for its greater size, and the broad band of red ochre round its walls, which denotes that it is a sacred building. The lower floor contains the main hall, which is used regularly for services. Here there is a big altar containing many gilded images, with a specially fine one of Guru Rimpoche (Padma Sambhava, who first introduced Buddhism into Tibet) in the centre. In front of the images there are always seven small bowls of water, in order that the gods may wash and drink. These are emptied at dusk and refilled again at dawn. When the water is taken away it is replaced by one or more tiny wicks, floating in either butter or oil, which give a faint glimmer like a night-light. On special occasions there will be dozens of these

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346 special Lama would come and meditate alone in this
792 completely darkened room. He would sometimes intone for hours at a stretch, accompanying his prayers on the cymbals and drum. After several hours of this rhythmical banging one's nerves would come near to breaking point. The only
793 thing then was to go for a solitary walk. This particular form of devotion is known as *Kongso Klong*, or the "sending away of Devils," and this was the name we eventually gave to its chief exponent. I later discovered that our presence in the monastery was thought to call for redoubled efforts in this direction, but I was not prepared for what happened on the day of my final departure. On this occasion Kongso Klong appeared before me with the usual present of eggs. I thought he had merely come to say good-bye, and was somewhat astonished when the others told me that he demanded ten rupees "for services rendered." This I paid.

346 Between the Kongso room and our bedroom was a short
[372] passage, which contained a large open fire-place for cooking.
● 114 This was identical with that in the ordinary living house, but during our time it was never used. For dining-room we had a tent. This was pitched outside the small house adjoining the monastery, which served both as kitchen and
888 living quarters for our servants. It was normally occupied by Pong Ring, a snuffling old gentleman and almost blind. He was a sort of verger and was supposed to keep the monastery clean and to tend its tiny garden. All this, however, was far beyond him and he seldom appeared. Sometimes on sunny days he would drag himself painfully down and would totter senilely round the building, at the same time turning his prayer-wheel and wheezing like a pug. When he felt up to it he would take a turn at the giant drums and his accompanying prayers sounded to me like the swarming of bees. Everyone treated him kindly; but the poor old man had outlived his time. He said he had once had a wife, but never a child to look after him in his extreme old age. Sometimes, when we were talking to others, he would pause in his circumambulations and stare

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

APPENDIX 2

BIBLIOGRAPHY

114 THE literature of Sikkim, scant though it is, is for the most part hidden away in books and articles about Tibet. Of the two books that deal almost exclusively with the former country one is fortunately a masterpiece. I refer to Hooker's *Himalayan Journals*, which was first published in 1854. This is, in my opinion, one of the most delightful books of travel ever written; and one of the most informative. It is still possible to pick up a first edition in the Charing Cross Road for a shilling or two. The other book, Florence Donaldson's *Lepcha Land*, can only be read as a "Period-piece." It contains no information of value.

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6:Nebesky-Wojkowitz--1 E-5 (1950-1953) AK5 Lepcha AK5

Anthropos. Volume 48 (1953)

/889/ The Lepcha Legend of the Building of the Tower

By René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz

Contents:

1. First Version
2. Second Version
3. Explanations
4. Supplement

●114 Part of the legendary material of the peoples living in the maharajah state of Sikkim at the foot of the Central Himalayas has already been treated by various people, and also a number of traditions of the Lepchas—the largest group of the original inhabitants of this territory—have been mentioned in numerous publications. (1)

1. Cf. Kali Kumar Das, "The Lepcha people and their notions of heaven and hell," Journal of the Buddhist Texts Society (Calcutta) Volume VI (1896). —C. de Beauvoir-Stocks, "Folk-lore and customs of the Lap-chas of Sikhim," Journal and Proceedings, Asiatic Society of Bengal, N. S. 21 (1925). — G. Gorer, Himalayan Village (London, 1938). — J. Morris, Living with Lepchas (London, 1938).

114 Singularly enough, however, one of the legends best known among
113 the Lepchas has not received—with the exception of two brief references—closer treatment in any of the pertinent works that have appeared to date: this is a tradition that tells of the unsuccessful project of the Lepcha people to construct a tower of clay pots reaching the vault of heaven.

112 One of the reasons for the survival of this legend is the circum-
114 stance that at the supposed site of the tower potsherds have been dug

114 172 up from time to time by the local population while working in the fields. Two decades ago these findings aroused the attention of a specialist; Sir Charles Bell, at that time Political Officer of Sikkim, had several of the discovered fragments brought to him, and at his direction the legend of the tower was also put down in writing. Unfortunately, however, this material never received a proper evaluation. —Through the courtesy of Sri T. N. Pulger, the owner of the Daramdin estate, within whose boundaries the site of the legendary tower building is situated today, I was able to obtain a reproduction of the report written for Sir Charles Bell and to take it into account in the present work.

/890/ 1. First Version

773 Most Lepchas who know the legend of the tower building are convinced that this enterprise was carried out by the original ancestors of the Lepcha people. This view is also expressed in the following Lepcha text which is reproduced first in orthographic transcription and then in translation.

/Lepcha text follows./ (2)

2. The text was translated with the kind assistance of Pastor T. S. Targain (Kalimpong).

The Story of the Ta-lom Plain

539 773 Long, long ago, when the creation of the world was completed, the Lepcha people, increasing in number after its creation, descended from /891/ the glacier mountain, (3) and the land of Ma-yel (4) was

3. According to legend, the Lepcha people had its origin on the mountain of Kanchenjunga, from whose glacial ice the original ancestral couple is supposed to have been created.

4. Concerning the land of Ma-yel cf. Gorer, Himalayan Village, p. 235 f.

/892/ 2. Second Version

773 614 Another version of the legend of the tower building, one which makes a claim to greater exactness, asserts that the erection of the tower was not undertaken by the ancestors of the Lepchas, but by a sib belonging to the Lepcha people which had the name Na ong. In present day Lepcha the word Na ong means "stupid fellow," —but it is probable that it took on this derogatory sense only later through the association of the sib name Na ong with the tradition of the absurd and unsuccessful tower building. In addition to the word Na ong sometimes the expression Chelickchom is also used as a designation for this clan; the latter word appears to come from the language of the Limbus, a people related to the Lepchas, and would thus strengthen the view encountered among the Limbus that the so-called Na ong or Chelickchoms were not Lepchas, but Limbus.

914 614 The chronicle of the maharajahs of Sikkim—in which the Na ong are listed among the Lepcha sibs—as well as the few scholarly publications that mention the name Na ong (5) report unanimously that

5. Das, The Lepcha people, p. 5.—G. B. Mainwaring, A Grammar of the Rong (Lepcha) Language (Calcutta, 1876), p. XX. —G. B. Mainwaring and A. Grünwedel, Dictionary of the Lepcha Language (Berlin, 1898), p. 189b. —De Beauvoir-Stocks, p. 359.

that sib has long been extinct. This assertion, to be sure, is not precisely true, for even at the beginning of this century there lived, near the place at which originally the tower was supposed to have been constructed, a family whose members regarded themselves as the last descendants of the Na ong tribe. In designating themselves they used the expression "tribe" /Stamm/. The head of this family, a man named Karandal, seems, however, to have been the only one who was still very familiar with the traditions of the Na ong. It was therefore he who gave the information for the report handed over to Sir Charles Bell. According to the information of the last preserver of the Na ong traditions, the building of the tower and the later history of the tribe ran as follows:

773 539 It was in gray primeval times that the tribe of the Na ong came into the world. The place that supposedly became the birthplace of

114 323 /896/ In this connection, to be sure, I must supplement the assertion concerning the pottery of the Lepcha which is found in G. Gorer's Himalayan Village (London, 1938), p. 67. As is stated in the above work, the generation of Lepchas living today in the reservation of Zongu has no knowledge of the art of pottery. Consequently copper, brass and porcelain pots of Nepalese, Chinese or even Western origin are used in their households; this statement corresponds to the observations I made among some of the Lepchas living outside the reservation. In addition, however, I was also able to find out that only two generations ago the art of pottery was practiced by a few men experienced in this trade, who on their part supplied the other [437] tribe members with the products of their work by way of barter. Their activity, to be sure, seems to have been limited to the manufacture of a type of vessel which was formerly used among the Lepchas. [415] These vessels called Tang ling fyŭ tyók generally had no handle and a short neck, and were rounded out most in the bottom third; at their broadest point they were about 30 centimeters in diameter. They were made of clay without the aid of a potter's wheel and were then baked. A few of these vessels are reputedly in use in a few remote places in Sikkim.

172 164 Also, the idea that the potsherds might come from urns or grave goods should not be completely disregarded. Should this assumption prove to be correct, then it is possible that the former settlers were not Lepchas, for insofar as I have been able to ascertain on the basis of my investigations of the old burial practices of the Lepchas, cremation of the dead and disposal of the ashes in urns or the practice of placing jugs containing food in the grave was not customary among the Lepchas. (9)

9. Cf. R. Nebesky de Wojkowitz, "Ancient funeral ceremonies of the Lepchas," Eastern Anthropologist (Lucknow), 5, (1951).

4. Supplement

172 Only a short time after this article had gone to press, I succeeded in obtaining a few of the potsherds discovered in the region of Daramdin. In the majority of cases these were small fragments with edges that had already been greatly worn down. They consisted of clay shot through with mica. They vary according to the

7: Hooker D-5 (1849-1851) 1854
AK5 Lepcha AK5

CHAPTER V.

View from Mr. Hodgson's of range of snowy mountains—Their extent and elevation—Delusive appearance of elevation—Sinchul, view from and vegetation of—Chumulari—Magnolias, white and purple—Rhododendron Dalhousiæ, arboreum and argenteum—Natives of Dorjiling—Lepchas, origin, tradition of flood, morals, dress, arms, ornaments, diet—cups, origin and value—Marriages—Diseases—Burial—Worship and religion—Bijoosa—Kampa Rong, or Arratt—Limboos, origin, habits, language, &c.—Moormis—Magras—Mechis—Comparison of customs with those of the natives of Assam, Khasia, &c.

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114 THE summer, or rainy season of 1848, was passed at or near Dorjiling, during which period I chiefly occupied myself in forming collections, and in taking meteorological observations. I resided at Mr Hodgson's for the greater part of the time, in consequence of his having given me a hospitable invitation to consider his house my home. The view from his windows is one quite unparalleled for the scenery it embraces, commanding confessedly the grandest known landscape of snowy mountains in the Himalaya, and hence in the world.* Kinchinjunga (forty-five miles distant) is the prominent object, rising 21,000 feet above the level of the observer out of a sea of intervening wooded hills; whilst, on a line with its snows, the eye descends below the horizon, to a narrow gulf 7000 feet deep in the mountains, where the Great Rungeet, white with foam, threads a tropical forest with a silver line.

[p. 122]

* For an account of the geography of these regions, and the relation of the Sikkim Himalaya to Tibet, &c., see Appendix.

8:Nebesky-Wojkowitz--1 E-5 (1950-1953) 1953 AK5 Lepcha AK5

Archiv für Völkerkunde

Volume VIII (1953)

/269/ New Acquisitions from Sikkim and Tibet

by René Nebesky-Wojkowitz

One of the results of my three-years of ethnographic research in the Sikkim-Tibet border region, which I concluded in February, 1953, was the establishment of collections for the Ethnographic Museum /Museum für Völkerkunde/ in Vienna. The majority of the acquired objects are household implements, articles of clothing, ceremonial paraphernalia, and weapons of the Lepchas, the original inhabitants of the Himalaya kingdom of Sikkim. The Lepcha tribe, related in race and language to the Tibetans, has in the course of the last three centuries suffered a progressive narrowing of its living area as a result of the penetration of stronger neighbors. It now numbers only 30,000 members, most of whom live in Sikkim proper. A few scattered Lepcha settlements are still to be found in the vicinity of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and the Nepalese district of Ilam, and in two valleys of Bhutan. Because of extensive adoption of the customs of Nepalese immigrants, who today form the largest population group of Sikkim, the Lepchas have sacrificed many of their native characteristics. The establishment of this first Lepcha collection therefore was very difficult, for most of the objects formerly used by the Lepchas have been replaced in more recent times by products of Nepalese, Indian, or even European origin.

The household implements included in the collection are made for the most part of bamboo; we find among them variously shaped vessels, spoons and spatulas, a churn-staff /Butterstampfer/, baskets, a grain riddle, strainers, a scale with one balance as well as wooden dishes of varying sizes, which are used for the preparation of millet beer, the alcoholic beverage preferred by the Lepchas. The tribe's art of weaving, which today is practically extinct, is demonstrated by a hand loom containing an almost completed piece of weaving; it shows—just as a second, already completed strip of weaving does

magic. Also included in the collection were a few urn fragments discovered after superficial excavations on the plateau of Daramdin in West Sikkim during the investigation of one version of the Lepcha legend of the building of a tower; the findings, a few of which reveal band and serrated /Wolfszahnmuster/ patterns, possibly stem from the time of the Great Tibetan Kingdom (9th century A.D.).

As for hunting and war weapons, the collection has several bows of varying size and type—among them a bow-sling used for hunting birds—, arrows, hunting poisons, bushknives, an old sword, and a round war shield of cane. Among the various fishing implements, a large casting net made of nettles deserves special mention.

It was also possible to acquire three of the rare old manuscripts written in the Lepcha script that is derived from the Tibetan alphabet; also copies of a few Lepcha books and of several wedding songs were made.

/271/ The Lepcha collection comprising 93 different objects is supplemented by a few objects of Bhutanese origin that are likewise used by the Lepchas (strips of weaving, a war shield of rhinoceros skin, small rice baskets with characteristic bright-colored patterns). The collection is further supplemented by about 300 color and black and white photographs as well as tape recordings of songs of the Lepchas and two of their neighbors, the Gurkhas and Tamang. Thanks to the friendly helpfulness of the leader of the third Danish Central Asia Expedition, His Royal Highness Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark—who is likewise to be thanked for making it possible to ship the collections to Europe in an especially favorable way—the accessible ethnographic material concerning the Lepchas was also enriched by color photographs of the costumes and dances of this tribe.

Concerning the objects stemming from the Tibetan area, we are dealing above all with ceremonial objects, which serve to supplement the Tibetan Collection already present in the museum: an almost three meter high "thread cross of the Ma mo demonesses" (Ma moi mdos), which is used as a demon trap in weather conjuring, thread amulets, paraphernalia for performing various ceremonies of the Lamas, a valuable old scroll painting (thang ka) depicting the mountain divinity g Nyan chhen thang lha, a scroll painting with pictures of the founder of the Karmapa sect—Dus gsum mkhyen po and his disciples; further, three thang ka with depictions of the oracle divinities that are relatively rarely portrayed on Tibetan scroll

9: Risley G-5 (1886-1888) 1891
AK5 Lepcha AK5

PREFACE

114 THE measurements recorded in these volumes were taken under my supervision in Bengal, the North-Western Provinces and the Panjab during 1886 and the two following years. The instruments used were those contained in the *boîte anthropométrique* recommended by Professor Paul Topinard in his *Éléments d'Anthropologie Générale*, with the addition of the goniometer devised by him for measuring the facial angle of Cuvier. With a single exception, Professor Topinard's methods of measuring and of calculating indices were followed throughout. The exception is the naso-malar index, the data for which were measured and the index calculated in the manner described by Mr. Oldfield Thomas in the Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland for May 1885.

606 My cordial acknowledgments are due to Mr. J. C. Nesfield, Inspector of Schools, Oudh, for supervising the measurements taken in the North-West Provinces; to Chandi Singh, Clerk in the office of the Inspector of Schools, Oudh, for carrying out those measurements; to Alá-uddin, Civil Hospital Assistant, Lahore, for the measurements taken by him for the Panjab; and especially to Babu Kumud Behari Sámanta, Civil Hospital Assistant, for the large series of measurements taken by him in Bengal, and for his labours in calculating indices and averages, and in making a variety of ethnographic inquiries for me.

A full analysis of the measurements, indicating their bearing upon the ethnology of Northern India, and also upon certain more general questions which have been discussed by ethnologists in Europe, will be given in a separate volume.

[following title page]

10: Waddell G-5 (1891) 1899 AK5 Lepcha AK5

THE 'LEPCHAS' OR 'RONGS' AND THEIR SONGS

BY

L. A. WADDELL, LL.D.

The 'Lepchas' or 'Rongs', are the wild Mongoloid aborigenes of Sikhim, a mountainous tract, about 8000 square miles in extent, in the south-eastern Himalayas, which is wedged in between Nepal on the west, Bhotan on the east, Tibet on the north, and the plains of Bengal on the south. These people are particularly interesting, as they are amongst the least civilized of all the Himalayan tribes [1]). They have preserved intact their tribal language and many of their primitive savage customs, on account of the peculiarly isolated position of their rugged country — shut in as it is by high wall-like ridges from Nepal and Bhotan, by the everlasting snows from Tibet, and by the deadly belt of *Tarai* jungle from the Indian plains. But they are now, however, fast dying out [2]), and losing their identity by intermarriage with the swarms of more civilized Nepalese and Tibetans who have lately swept into their country, and especially so since it has been opened up under British rule; but neither their language or customs have yet been fully recorded, nor have their ethnological affinities been clearly ascertained.

Having lived amongst these people for several years in Darjiling and in their forest homes, I here attempt to rescue from oblivion some of their songs — a subject on which nothing has hitherto been published. This I do at the request of Professor A. Grünwedel, who has already in the T'oung-Pao [3]) published a small dictionary of their speech, which he compiled from some missionary tracts, and the Lepcha Grammar of the late Mr. Mainwaring [4]); and he is at present editing Mr. Mainwaring's large manuscript: Lepcha-English Dictionary. My anthropometric and ethnographic materials bearing on the racial affinities of this tribe are too bulky to be included in the present paper. Here it may be sufficient to mention that the results of my observations are in many ways

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[1]) Except those in the extreme east, in Assam.

[2]) The pure Lepchas now (1898) number only a few thousands, and their language is likely to become extinct in two or three generations.

[3]) In 1892. Also a short Lepcha text in 1896, 526—60, and another in Bastian's Festschrift, Berlin 1896.

[4]) Grammar of the Rong or Lepcha. Calcutta 1876.

[p. 41]

10: Waddell G-5 (1891) 1899 AK5 Lepcha AK5

114 opposed to the views of Mr. RISLEY [1]), Colonel DALTON [2]), and other writers who have repeated the statements of the earlier travellers Drs. CAMPBELL and HOOKER, who mixed up the Lepchas a good deal with their Tibetan conquerors. For my results show, that

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A RONG OR LEPCHA.
(From photograph by Mr. HOFFMANN).

the so-called Khamba-branch of the tribe are not Lepchas at all, but Tibetan invaders from the Kham province of Tibet; whereas the Lepchas are decidedly of Indo-Chinese origin

[1]) Tribes and Castes of Bengal. Calcutta 1869, IV. p. 5.
[2]) Ethnology of Bengal. Calcutta, 1872.

and seem to have entered their present country from 'Further-India' by way of the Asam valley; and they appear to be an outlying member of that group of wild tribes which are broadly known by their Indian title of *Naga* that is the hill-savages [1]). They are especially near the 'Arleng' or Mikir-Nagas of the Garo- and Kasia-hills, to the South of the Brahmaputra-valley, and have much in common with the *Ching-pó* or *Sing-po* — the 'Ka-chins' of the Burmese — as well as with that branch of the Malayan Indo-Chinese which has been named by the late Captain Forbes, the Mon-Anam family. Even linguistically they do not belong to the Tibetan group at all.

The Lepchas call themselves '*Rong*' which may be considered as their true tribal name; and it means in their vernacular 'an occupant', in the sense of aborigines or autochthones of the area. They have no tradition of having come from any other country and know nothing of their origin. The earliest mention we have of them is in Tibetan history which records them as inhabiting this country on the Tibetan invasion about 250 years. The term Lepcha or properly Lapcha or 'Lapche' is a Nepalese word, the contemptuous epithet applied to this tribe by their Nepalese neighbours. And it seems to me to mean 'the vile-speakers' [2]), because the Lepchas are the only tribe of the pre-Tibetan mongoloids of the Himalayas of Nepal and its borders, who have not adopted the externals of Hinduism and the Hindi dialect, the Parbatiya. The Tibetans, on the other hand, call the Lepchas, the 'people of the *Mon*-country' (*Mon-pa*, *Mon-rigs*, vulgarly *Mó-rik*), which is the general Tibetan name for the Lower Himalayas from Kumaon on the north-west to Asam in the south-east, as well as for Upper Burma. This name is doubtless related to the pre-Burmese inhabitants of Burma, the Mon or "Ialaigno" who are now pressed down to the coast-line of Pegu.

The current name of the country, namely "Sikhim" [3]), is also Nepalese. The Lepchas call it 'the *Ne* country', or Ne-lyang, which is usually interpreted trough the Tibetan as 'the place of caves'. Caves, however, are not numerous in the tract occupied by the Lepchas. Possibly this name was originally applied to the whole of this part of the Himalaya, as the tract adjoining on the west is still called the country of the *Ne*-wars, that is 'the people of *Ne*'; whilst the affix 'pal' of the modern name of the country of the Newars, to wit, Ne-*pal*, curiously forms the old Tibetan name for that country, the modern name of which, it seems to me, may be derived from the juxta-position of these 'Ne' and 'Pal' countries.

The language of the Lepchas can scarcely be said to possess a written character. The so-called Lepcha character I found in 1891 (when investigating the history of the country for my section of the Sikhim Gazetteer), was invented only at the beginning of last century [4]) by a Lama-king of Sikhim, with a view to convert the Lepchas to Lamaism. He

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[1]) From the Sanskrit *Naga*, a hill; the word, as applied to hillmen, covers the sense of *naked hill-savages* (*Nanga*), and the myth which associates these wild hillmen or *Nagas* with snakes or *Nagas* is, I believe, comparatively modern and Brahmanical in origin.

[2]) It has its parallel in the Anglo-Saxon epithet of ‚Welsh' or ‚the Jabberers', the contemptuous term applied by the English to their less civilised neighbours in Wales; also perhaps ‚Barbarian' from bar-bar, onomatopoetic for gibberish. Cf. TAYLOR's ‚Names and Places', London, p. 67.

[3]) The most trustworthy form is 'Sikhim', not 'Sikkim'.

[4]) This fact was recorded by me in 1892 in my Section of the *Gazetteer of Sikhim*, but during the process of editing it got transferred with other notes of mine to the Chapters compiled by Mr. PAUL (pp. 1—88, where it will be found at page 12 under the head of the Lama in question — Pag-dar Nam-gyal, who was the great king of Sikhim, born 1686, died 1717 A. D.

212 114 designed it from the Tibetan and Nepalese forms of the Indian alphabet. It imperfectly represents many of the Lepcha sounds, and especially so in its romanized equivalents as given by Mr. MAINWARING, in his grammar above mentioned. This was particularly noticeable when I took down the spoken words directly from the lips of the identical men who had been Mr. MAINWARING's chief informants. Their pronunciation of many of the words differed considerably from his record, especially in the vowel sounds. Mr. M. himself partially admitted to me this difference, when I confronted him with these men; but he excused himself by alleging that none of the Lepchas knew their own language properly, and he added, when he kept a school for Lepchas at Darjeeling, he never could get them to pronounce their own words aright!

114 194 Indeed, it was evident that the enthusiastic Mr. MAINWARING, in addition to arbitrarily altering the Lepcha language, and subordinating the actual facts to his theories on the subject, did not distinguish clearly many of the common vowel sounds. [1]) To express however by any system of transliteration the rich vowel sounds of the soft Lepcha speech with its melodious cadences is extremely difficult. Most of the vowels are clearly diphthongs and triphthongs [2]), so much so as to suggest the possibility that they represent contracted forms of longer words from which some of the consonants may have dropped out in the wear and tear of use through many ages, when unfixed by writing. Little phonetic decay, however, seems to have occurred during the past 180 years or so, judging from the written forms found in the first Lepcha book, which appeared under the hybrid Tibetan-title, the *Tashe-sung* and which is believed to have been composed about that date [3]), certainly not earlier.

194 Moreover, it does not seem to have been recognised that the Lepcha speech is distinctly tonic, abounding in homonyms, one word having a variety of meanings according to the tone in which it is uttered. These tones I have not attempted to indicate here, as I have not had time to study the language in sufficient detail for this purpose. And in view of the comparatively recent introduction of the so-called alphabet, I have preferred instead of this latter to give here the spoken forms, in the roman character, as noted down phonetically by myself according to the generally recognized system of transliteration [4]); although I also give the written text of the songs for reference.

192 The poverty of words in the Lepcha language is striking, but not more than one would expect in the language of such primitive people. Their scanty stock of verbal-roots

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[1]) Thus the word for 'a good spirit', which is clearly pronounced by the Lepchas as *Rāen* or *Rāden*, was not only spelt, but pronounced by Mr. M. as '*Rum*' or '*Reem*'. Again *Tak* or *Tāk* 'the head' is never pronounced *Tak* or *T'yak* as spelt by Mr. M. Nor is *Pun-di* 'a queen' ever pronounced *Pundi*, which only obscures its etymological relationship to *Pun-no* 'a king'. Similarly *Kup* 'young', *Sak-dum*, 'world', *Sa-mā* 'a bear', *Mawo or Mōo* 'flesh-meat', *L'o* a 'cool hill', above about 7,000 feet elevation, *Kyang* a hamlet, 'Sa-ber' a musk-deer; *Pak-o'ok*, 'a jungle', *Yak-mun* 'a Lama', are never pronounced *Kup*, *Sak-dum*, *Sa-mo*, *Mōn*, *Hlo*, *Kyong*, *Sa-ber*, *Pak-sōk*. *Yak-mun*, as given by Mr. M.

[2]) Thus the word for 'a spirit' seems to be often pronounced ‚*Raedun*'.

[3]) The general nature of this and some other Lepcha books were first indicated by me (in Gazetteer of Sikhim 1894, p. 288; and Buddhism of Tibet London 1895 p. 168). A chapter of this booklet has been published with a Tibetan and German translation in the Toung-Pao (1896) by Professor GRÜNWEDEL, who has shown that it contains a version of the *Suppāra Jātaka*. It seems however with Tibetan words and the Sikhimese forms of the latter. Nor can its authority for particular forms of words be taken too strictly, for it was never printed, and none of its extant manuscript copies are perhaps very old. Indeed most of these have been written by pupils of Mr. MAINWARING himself.

[4]) In generally the same as that adopted by the Royal Asiatic Society of London, except for the letter ā, and ch for c.

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192 denotes the chief objects in nature and their relationships, the trees, plants and animals, and suffices for their easily satisfied physical wants. A characteristic and suggestive word is their name for a 'hunter' which is 'the flesh-meat-pursuing father' (*Maon-riák-bo*) and the word father itself means 'the giver'. There are so few abstract names, that it is almost impossible to express many abstract ideas in their language. Hence the first Lepcha book, the *Tashe sung* or 'Scripture of the Lepcha God *Tashi*', which was composed by a 192 Tibetan Lama and which treated of Lamaistic Buddhism, was forced to borrow words 114 freely from the Tibetan. Indeed the second part of this book-title is pure Tibetan. The large extent to which this borrowing has been carried on in the so-called Lepcha books was not fully realized by Mr. MAINWARING. For I found, on inspecting his manuscript Lepcha-English Dictionary, that fully half of the words which he believed to be Lepcha were in reality Tibetan, either pure primitive Tibetan, or the corrupt Sikhimese dialect of this latter language [1]), and the inclusion of such words tended to mislead in that it made the Lepcha appear somewhat similar in roots and structure to the Tibetan while it is in fact very different.

533 The very ancient nature of their songs is evident from the fact that they preserve 192 many archaic words and phrases, the meaning of which is now completely forgotten by the Lepchas themselves, who, however, still pride themselves in using them, although they no longer know their sense.

These archaic words and phrases usually occupy the position of adjectives or qualifying phrases, or nouns in opposition, which are prefixed or affixed to a word possessing a well known meaning, so that these archaic words are treated as redundant. They are called by Mr. MAINWARING 'figurative' expressions, and he instances as an example the phrases 'to close the eyes' and 'to be a stiff one' as prefixes to the root 'to die' whilst the affixes are considered by him to be mere 'expletives' and often without 'distinct signification'. To some extent they are perhaps metaphorical, [2]) though generally, I think, they may prove to be descriptive.

101 One of the commonest of these so-called *Tung-bor* expressions is the prefix to the 192 tribal name, namely '*Mo-tan-chi' Rong*. If you ask a Lepcha, what is a "Rong", what is the meaning of '*Mo-tan-chi*', he always replies that is has no meaning or sense whatever. To me however it seems, that the first two syllables are clearly the roots for 'Mother' and 'flesh' (*Mo* + *tan*); and *chi* although now ordinarily used for 'spirit' in liquor, may originally have meant animal spirits, 'inspirited or cheerful'. Thus the designation of the tribe would mean 'the (one) Mother-flesh (or consanguineous) jolly Lepchas'; if his hypothesis be correct, and it has much in its favour, the prominence herein given in the tribal designa-

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[1]) Thus '*Sa-ud-kar*' is given as Lepcha and the equivalent of Tibetan '*p'yag 'ts'al*, to pray; but both these phrases are Tibetan and neither of them really means to pray — the last being a salutation with the hands, and the former in the vulgar Sikhimese pronunciation of the Tibetan *gsol-ba-deb*, to make a request. Cf. JÄSCHKE's Dict. 279.

Such words will doubtless be omitted by Professor GRÜNWEDEL in editing this unquestionable valuable work of Mr. M. And it is to be hoped that the forthcoming dictionary may be arranged in the order of the European alphabet so as to make it more generally useful as a work of reference; for Lepcha, as we have seen, has practically no character of its own, and certainly to print its vocabulary in the order of the Indian alphabet seems undesirable, as the language is structurally so different from either the Indian or Tibetan.

[2]) The Kafir speech frequently employs metaphorical expressions. MAX MÜLLER's Science of Language 2nd ed. II. 275.

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in Tibet also, the Mongoloids are farmers. In the regions of North-West China, in Tsing-hai and Kan-su, we found that in many Chinese, living there, the Mongoloid element was completely lacking or present in a very negligible manner. These people are also of a larger build ; they have the long, high-bridged noses, the long narrow faces and in many cases the Mongolian fold is not to be found. One might object that this was due to the influence of non-Mongoloid peoples like the Tibetans and the Turks who repeatedly overran these districts and ruled over the people for long periods of time. We shall refer later to the Mongoloids in China. At this stage it can be said that in China, the pure Mongoloids came from the farming inhabitants in Eastern and Central China as we have proved in the first chapter. One cannot quote the Mongols as counter evidence, as they are a very mixed and younger culture with strong agricultural influences.

We shall not deal in a detailed manner with the customs and habits of the Lepchas at birth, betrothal, marriage, death and burial. There is only one more point which I should like to touch upon : the judging of the Lepchas through the descriptions of European authors like Gorer and C.J. Morris. The two authors describe these people as being dominated by a strong, a very strong, sex complex. J. H. Hutton remarks in his foreword to Gorer's book, "Another aspect of Lepcha life which is almost as striking as the absence of aggression, is the apparent obsession of the whole community with sex. I was tempted to suppose that the author of this book had overemphasised the Lepchas' attitude to sex through an unconscious dramatisation, a journalistic dramatisation, if I may call it so, of a want of reticence on sexual matters of all kinds in a degree quite unfamiliar in his own society. The perusal, however, of Mr. Morris's book shows that I did Mr. Gorer an injustice. At the same time I am rather inclined to feel that the apparent preoccupation of the Lepchas with sex does not necessarily imply that the importance attached to it by them in their lives is proportionately theatrical. One is inclined to wonder whether this consciousness of sex is the cause or the result of the Lepchas' declining population, a decline of which the Lepchas are acutely aware. Probably, if there is any such connection at all it is by now a vicious

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114 831 [562] circle, but either alternative seems possible."[110] And Gorer himself writes: "The Lepchas are much occupied with sex; it is the subject to much of their conversation and nearly all their humour; it is regarded as almost as essential as food. Sex is intended to be almost exclusively sensual and almost impersonal; the culture makes no allowance for deep personal relationships passionately adhered to between sexual partners."[111]

In the first place we maintain that the sex instinct, the instinct that prompts a man to propagate his own kind, is a very strong one, natural to all peoples, and the Rong are no exceptions. It cannot be said of them that they are passionate in an extreme manner. The relationship that exists between male and female among all Asiatic peoples is different from that which prevails among the Europeans. The same is true of man and wife within the bond of marriage. The Lepchas are in no way alien to the general Asiatic picture. The method Gorer adopts to demonstrate his theory is wrong. He puts together the love affairs of a few individual Lepchas and with one unwarranted generalization he regards it as the average sexual standard of all Lepchas. Anyone could draw a similar picture of every nationality in the world if one would collect the "Chronique scandaleuse" of separate individuals and present it under the title "Sex Life of the Nation."[111a]

881 831 114 562 Gorer moreover states that the Lepchas believe or pretend to believe that puberty of girls, the development of breasts and menstruation occur only through sexual relationship with a man or a supernatural creature, the Kandu Mung, who is supposed to appear to the girl in order to make her sexually mature. This, of course, would very rarely occur. Most girls about nine or ten years of age would have to be raped. It would appear that the men invented this story to make the women dependent on them, particularly if the female desired puberty to come on. This belief of Gorer however we could not ascertain in the very places where Gorer carried out his research. All the same we were able to check on it

110. op. cit. p. 27.
111. op. cit. p. 332.
111a. G. S. Ghurye, Sexual Behaviour of the American Female, Sociological Bulletin, Bombay 1954, Vol. III, No. 2, p. 168 sq.

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in other places. The Rong women are not so simple as to be taken in by such a man-made legend. They, on the contrary, affirm that the sexual maturity of girls and the development of the secondary sex characteristics occur without sexual relationship with man. The only difference is that the breasts of the girl who had had sexual relationship with man would produce some milk. The Maharaja of Sikkim and other educated Sikkimese, who read Gorer's book, found his description to be a defamation of the Lepcha character.

The Lepchas are the descendants of the first brother Lepcha, as reported above. They fall into three divisions, which are named after the districts in which they live. The Ilame Lepchas live in the Ilame district of Nepal; the Dandjung Lepchas on the other side of the Tista river in Sikkim; the Dam-sang Lepchas in Indian Sikkim and Bhutan. The second brother was called God-she, and is the father of the Jimdar tribe. The third was Meche, and he is the protoparent of the Meche. Each of these three have a different language.[113]

B. Sikkim Yak-tamba

There is in Sikkim a class of people who are called Limbu by the Nepalese and Tzong-pa by the Tibetans. They call themselves Yak-tamba, Ek-tamba and Ek-tambu. Tradition has it that, after the Lepchas, they are the oldest inhabitants of the place having settled there before the Tibetans and the Nepalese came to settle in the land. They are intermixed with the Rong in a very remarkable manner. At the present time they inhabit the land to the west as far as the river Arun as we have already pointed out before. They are regarded as divisions of the Limbu and bear a very close resemblance to them. The Yak-tamba have flatter faces and more Mongoloid features than the Lepchas.

C. The Bhodja of Sikkim

The Tibetans who migrated into Sikkim are called the Sikkim Bhodja. Legend links the Tibetan Je-khye-bu-

113. cfr. the report of the Rai given above concerning the first parents and their three sons; see p. 7, 38. Here we have the same content of the myth.

[pp. 110 – 159 not processed]